



Threatened Routes Extended into 1997

Congress Responds to Political Firestorm Ignited by Amtrak Plan

Most Northeast Corridor Cuts Restored

The service cuts Amtrak unveiled August 8 and planned for November 10 ("Who Shot Dallas?," Aug. News) are postponed to late April or early May. The omnibus spending bill passed before Congress adjourned has \$22.5 million "to continue service on routes [Amtrak] currently plans to terminate" and \$60 million more in Northeast Corridor capital funding. Report language says the \$22.5 million is to "support service until the affected state legislatures have an opportunity to meet and decide whether to 'buy back' services, or take other action necessary to permit the services to continue." [Travelers' Advisory, p. 4, has related service information.]

The \$82.5 million is largely the work of retiring Senate Appropriations Chairman Mark Hatfield (R-OR), Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX, new chair of the Senate Commerce subcommittee that oversees Amtrak), Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ), and Frank D. Raines, President Clinton's new Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Citizen reaction to Amtrak's plans was quick and—in the affected communities—severe. Observers along the Texas

Eagle route say reaction was unprecedented. [It is relevant that Texas got a \$180 million windfall in federal highway funds in the regular fiscal 1997 transportation appropriations law.]

Hutchison quickly scheduled a September 10 hearing on Amtrak's plans. NARP, Oklahoma DOT, Amtrak, and a panel of mayors followed opening presentations by Sen. Phil Gramm (R-TX) and Rep. Tim Hutchinson (R-AR). Mayor Celia Boswell of Mineola, TX, testified that "it took us six years to get a stop. It came April 14. We had a big celebration April 29. Then on August 8, I got a phone call from Amtrak..."

NARP's Ross B. Capon emphasized there was strong demand for all the threatened services. He said Amtrak's basic problem is the anti-rail bias in federal transportation policy, but he also criticized various aspects of Amtrak's plans. [Send us \$2 for his written statement, or see NARP's web site.]

Strong public support for the Pioneer was indicated by the fact that several on-route chambers of commerce helped cover the travel expenses of another hearing witness, Baker City, OR, Mayor Larry Griffith. He said: "Our region's population is 40% people over 55 years old. Winters are harsh. I-84 is impassable at times. Rail is a critical link."

It took an open, almost two-year process to implement Amtrak's only other major route-cut plan (in 1979), when the biggest metro area losing service was Columbus, OH. This year, the biggest target was far larger—Dallas-Fort Worth, the nation's ninth-largest metro area, with 4.2 million people. It should not be surprising then that Congress blocked Amtrak's plan to abandon 42 communities on three months' notice.

In a September 25 release, Hatfield warned Oregonians the funding is only "a temporary fix...I am hopeful that this six-month extension will be used wisely by everyone involved...including the Oregon DOT, the Oregon State Legislature, Amtrak officials, and the affected communities...I know that the Oregon Department of Transportation has already begun the work of finding alternative approaches to meeting the transportation needs of Eastern Oregonians apart from Amtrak service. Whether that entails new commercial air service or an intercity bus service, I am confident that the innovative spirit of Oregonians will [solve] the problem."

The omnibus bill has these other transportation funds (in right column of table at left): \$198 million for aviation anti-terrorism; \$82 million for emergency highway relief; \$29 million for Federal Aviation Administration operations; and \$59 million to cover a \$400 million loan for the rail-truck Los Angeles-Long Beach Corridor. ■

1997 TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Funds (\$ millions) appropriated in HR 3675 and omnibus bill

Administration	1995	1996	1997	1997	1997	1997	1997
	Enacted	Enacted	Amtrak Request	Clinton Request	House Bill	Senate Bill	Final
Federal Highway	19,879	19,970	—	19,423	19,682	20,042	20,365
Federal Aviation	8,392	8,216	—	8,103	8,155	8,262	8,489
Federal Transit	4,614	4,051	—	4,296	4,051	4,381	4,382
Federal Railroad	1,162	874	—	1,048	713	1,011	973
* Amtrak + N.E. Corr.	994	750	1,066	919	542	872	843

*These numbers also in Federal Railroad Administration total.

Intercity Rail Passenger Categories

Amtrak:	1995	1996	1997	1997	1997	1997	1997
	Enacted	Enacted	Request	Request	Bill	Bill	Final
* Operations	392	285	250	200	200	200	223
Capital	230	230	360	297	120	250	223
** Mandatory payments	150	120	142	142	142	142	142
Northeast Corridor	200	115	314	280	80	280	255
High Speed Rail	23	24	—	27	20	27	25
TOTAL	1,017	774	1,066	945	562	899	867

* 1996 operating figure includes \$100 million for "transition costs" related to Amtrak restructuring, service cuts, equipment retirement. Unspecified transition costs also included in 1995 and 1997 operations.

** Federal railroad retirement and unemployment insurance costs in excess of Amtrak's demands on system, therefore not part of true cost of operating Amtrak system.

Higher Speeds Coming to Michigan

The Michigan Department of Transportation, Federal Railroad Administration, Amtrak, and Harmon Industries all are prepared to start an experimental signal system on part of the Chicago-Detroit route October 11. The \$18-million trial will allow passenger trains to run up to 110 mph. The current top speed is 79 mph. Michigan DOT sees this as a step toward three-hour, air-competitive service from Chicago to Detroit (the average now is 5:35).

For nearly 50 years, federal regulation has required costly cab signal systems for trains exceeding 79 mph. Once widespread, these systems now are rare outside the Northeast. Their absence—not necessarily track or train characteristics—explains why most Amtrak service is limited to 79 mph. Amtrak asked FRA for a waiver to exceed 79 mph for the Michigan project. Tests of other “positive train control” systems are pending in the Pacific Northwest and Illinois (Apr. News).

The existing, 40-year-old, centralized traffic control (CTC) system with wayside signals is controlled from Michigan City, IN. The new system, called ITCS (Incremental Train Control System), will augment the CTC. Detectors along the track will monitor signal aspects, track occupancy, switch status, and highway-crossing gate status; digital display panels will report this information to train engineers and dispatchers. Global positioning system (GPS) receivers on trains will use satellites to communicate train location. The new system will stop trains if they go too fast.

In Michigan, the test will take place on the longest, Amtrak-owned track segment outside the Northeast, which is a 96-mile line from Kalamazoo, MI to Porter, IN (junction with Conrail’s Buffalo-Chicago main line). This ex-Penn Central segment was conveyed to Amtrak in 1976 when Conrail formed, and didn’t want it. A few Conrail freight trains a week also use it.

The first segment to be tested this fall will be 20 miles extending through Dowagiac and Niles, MI. By mid-1997 it will be extended east through Lawton and west through Dayton, for a total of 49 miles. A further extension east to Kalamazoo and west to New Buffalo is planned, for a total of 73 miles.

Because the initial segment is just 20 miles, no adjustment in schedules is foreseen this fall.



—James Riley

ALSO ON THE DETROIT-CHICAGO LINE—This F40 is no longer an old locomotive needing costly repairs, but a cab car, being pushed toward Chicago on August 14 by a sold-out *Wolverine*, east of Kalamazoo. Amtrak converted a prototype in February, estimating the cost to be about \$244,000 per unit, about half the cost of converting an old coach to a cab car. There is a big door and compartment (suitable for baggage and mail) where the engine was. The unit provides an added measure of safety to passengers and crew in case of a collision.

New Law Threatens California Amtrak Corridors

California is known for its unified, wide-ranging state passenger rail program, which involves three rail corridors tied to off-corridor places (and to each other) with a network of dedicated feeder buses. That network faces a potential threat from a law approved July 22 (SB 457).

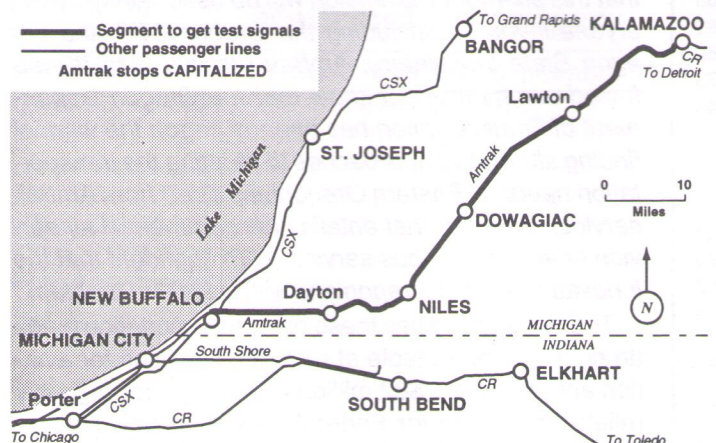
The law transfers responsibility for the program from Caltrans to regional boards (one each for the *San Diegans*, *San Joaquins* and *Capitols*). These new boards must be formed and have interagency agreements with the state in place by December 31. The boards are to set up operating agreements with Amtrak, but can give administrative authority for the intercity trains to local transit agencies (SB 457 makes BART the administrator of the *Capitols* for the first three years).

The *Capitols* board has been formed, but not all members appointed. Sacramento local interests are balking over terms in the law, such as liability and future financial support. The *San Joaquins* have no board yet. Local counties have shown little interest in forming one, as the prevalent view is that the state should be responsible for intercity train service. *San Diegan* area officials are asking for a legal review of the law.

Still, some state officials predict that state support for the trains will be cut off in two or three years if local officials do not cooperate in forming the boards.

On the surface, the reason for the new law was dissatisfaction with how Caltrans ran the program. Local advisory committees for the *San Joaquins* and *Capitols* felt their concerns were not being heard by Caltrans. But some rail supporters in California feared the new law was a money-and-power grab by transit agencies, who would be more interested in beefing up commuter-type services at the expense of true intercity services. It may have been possible instead to create a state board separate from Caltrans to run a unified service, or to try to fix problems at Caltrans.

October-July ridership is up 56% on the *Capitols*, 33% on the *San Joaquins*, and 24% on the *San Diegans*.



—Scott Leonard

CLEVELAND LIGHT RAIL RIDERSHIP EXPLODES

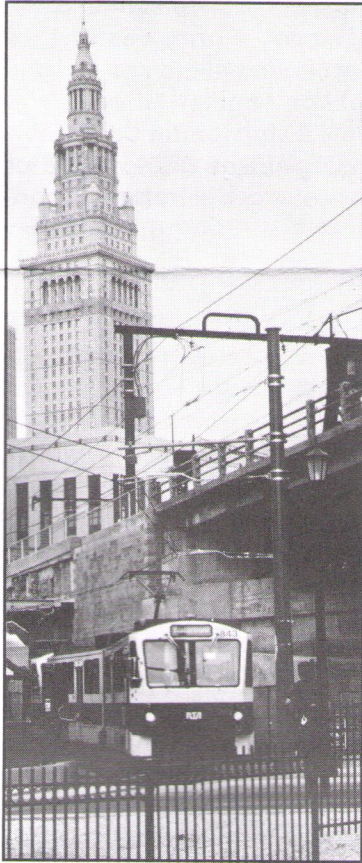
The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA) opened an extension of its 2.2-mile Blue-Green light rail line from Tower City to the Waterfront on July 10. The new line serves the Flats entertainment district, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the Great Lakes Science Center, and (at the North Coast stop) the Amtrak station.

According to the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers (OARP), GCRTA had predicted 600,000 riders would use the new segment in its first year of operation—but 250,000 used it in the first three weeks. Trains had to be added, and a third rush hour—

lunch time—is developing, as workers from office towers on the light rail line head to the Flats to eat.

Indeed, Flats businesses reported a 20% increase in lunch-time business after the light rail line opened. Another new group using the light rail line is senior citizens. Young people had always found their way to the 50 night clubs and restaurants in the Flats, but OARP reported that a local TV station interviewed a number of seniors who said they'd never been to the Flats before because they didn't want to drive there. Now they take light rail. The line is also spurring much new commercial development along its route.

In this photo, a Waterfront-bound light-rail train is leaving Tower City (the former Terminal Tower, Cleveland's station for intercity trains before Amtrak). On the bridge above the train (where catenary is visible) is the GCRTA Red Line to the airport—transfers between all the rail transit lines are made at Tower City.



—Walter E. Zullig, Jr.

THE GREAT AMERICAN STATION FOUNDATION...

...is a new, non-profit organization established to promote and facilitate the renovation of stations across the US. Its creation was announced September 9 by Amtrak President Thomas M. Downs. Amtrak has provided \$2 million in capital grants as seed money. Its initial board is made up of Downs, Jeffrey Boothe (partner, Oppenheimer, Wolff and Donnelly), Richard Bradley (president, International Downtown Association), David Burwell (president, Rails to Trails Conservancy), Ellen Guidera (business development vice president, Disney Consumer Products), Richard Moe (president, National Trust for Historic Preservation) and Hon. John Robert Smith (mayor, Meridian, MS). For more information, call or write Amtrak Planning and Business Development; 60 Massachusetts Ave., N.E.; Washington, DC 20002; 202/906-2887.

ADDITIONS TO AIRPORT ACCESS TABLE (p. 3, Aug. News)—Shuttle buses connect San Francisco International Airport and CalTrain's Millbrae commuter station; Metrolink and Amtrak serve the commuter/intercity rail station at Burbank Airport, CA.

FRA's Upbeat High-Speed Report

The Federal Railroad Administration in August released "High-Speed Ground Transportation in America," a 47-page report mandated by the 1991 ISTEA law. The report has been commonly referred to as the "commercial feasibility" study.

In every corridor considered, FRA found at least one option with the potential for a private/public partnership, which FRA sees as vital if intercity rail passenger corridor improvement projects are to succeed. Corridors had to meet two criteria: to justify public investment, benefits needed to exceed costs; and—once service began—commercial revenues needed to cover ongoing operating and capital costs.

FRA measured total costs, and total benefits to users and to the general public—"These benefits recognize the effects of diverting significant passenger volumes from existing modes to [high-speed ground transportation], and consist of savings from alleviated congestion and reduced emissions in air and highway travel."

Incremental technologies ("Accelerail" in the report) also were considered—using existing rights-of-way (except Tampa-Orlando), defined by top speed (90, 110, 125, 150 mph), fossil-fuel propelled or electrified. The report also covers "New High-Speed Rail" (new rights-of-way at 200 mph) and mag-lev (at 300+ mph, though never even attained in tests).

The 90-mph and 110-mph options produced the best ratios (table below), but the higher speeds generally produced greater *total* benefits.

Besides the corridors shown below, FRA included briefer, very positive looks at these "natural extensions of the [Boston-Washington] Northeast Corridor" (NEC): the New York-Albany-Buffalo Empire Corridor and the Washington-Richmond-Raleigh-Charlotte "Southeast Corridor." FRA also looked at NEC improvements *beyond* those already in the works, with less impressive results. The NEC—with present top speeds of 125 mph, and 150 mph planned for 1999—is North America's only existing high-speed service. ■

For a copy of the report, write the Federal Railroad Administration; Attn.: CFS, RDV-11; 400-7th St., S.W.; Washington, DC 20590; or call 202/632-3279; or see web site <<http://www.bts.gov/smart/com/SMART-HIGHSPEED@BTS.GOV.html>> (caution—address is case-sensitive).

BEST BENEFIT-TO-COST RATIOS from FRA's 'Commercial Feasibility' Report

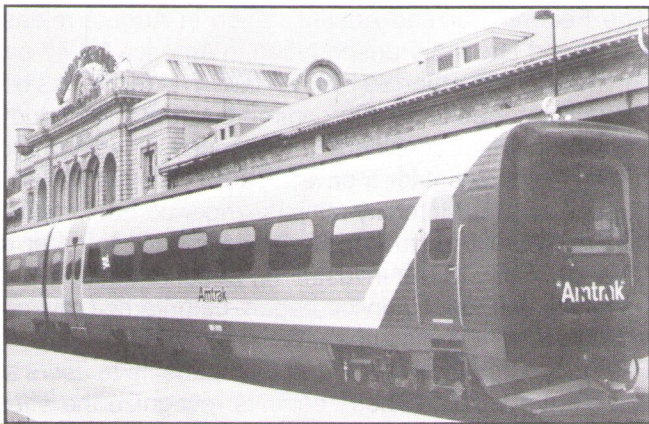
Corridor	Benefit-to-Cost Ratio		Total cost (\$ millions)	
	90 mph	110 mph	90 mph	110 mph
California South-1	2.5	2.3	867	1,068
Chicago Hub-2	2.5	2.5	2,201	2,758
California North-South-3	2.2	2.0	2,619	4,410
Pacific Northwest-4	2.2	2.0	1,227	1,490
O'Hare-Chicago-Detroit	2.0	2.1	979	1,225
O'Hare-Chicago-St. Louis	1.4	1.6	811	1,040
Texas Triangle-5	1.5	1.4	1,562	2,657
Florida-6	1.1	1.2	1,746	1,850

NOTES:

- 1) Los Angeles-San Diego
- 2) Chicago to Detroit, St. Louis, Milwaukee, O'Hare Airport
- 3) San Diego-Los Angeles-Bay Area
- 4) Vancouver-Seattle-Portland-Eugene
- 5) Dallas-Houston-San Antonio-Fort Worth-Dallas
- 6) Miami-Orlando/Tampa

The best benefit-to-cost ratios were at top speeds of 90 or 110 mph—except in Florida, where 125 mph (fossil-fuel) had the same ratio as 110 mph (1.2) and "Accelerail" assumed a new Tampa-Orlando alignment.

FLEXLINERS TOUR THE WEST



—Brant Liebmann

Two IC-3 Flexliner train sets began their two-year North American tour in the West during July and August—extensively in California (with side trips to Las Vegas and Reno), and with visits to Salt Lake City, Grand Junction and Denver. The trains ran in revenue service on Amtrak's *San Diegoan* route for two weeks. After a brief September visit to Boston, they are spending the autumn in VIA Rail revenue service in Ontario. The trains are built by ADtranz (ABB-Daimler Benz Transportation) and are used in several European countries and Israel (the sets on tour are Israeli). Each set is made up of three self-propelled rail diesel cars (see January News).

The Flexliner got good marks from passengers on comfort. ADtranz hopes the train can fill a North American market niche for economical, self-propelled equipment on non-electrified short-distance corridors. They can be split and combined easily mid-route. An electric version is available, and can pull the diesel version in electric territory, if necessary. The Flexliner is shown above in July, on its way to California, as it paused at Denver Union Station.

UPDATE ON ISTEAFUNDS TO STATIONS

The American Passenger Rail Coalition has released a report on ISTEAFunding for renovating active Amtrak stations since 1991. So far, \$68 million has leveraged other money for a total of \$210 million spent on these stations. The report has a table showing the stations, and more detailed profiles of 11 stations. It is available for \$8.50 (or \$7.25 each for four or more) from APRC; 900-2nd St., N.E., Ste. 303; Washington, DC 20002; 202/408-1808.

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

November 10 Amtrak timetable: To comply with the omnibus law (p. 1), threatened services—including the New Orleans-Mobile *Gulf Coast Limited* that was to have run through September 29—will run through late April or early May. Planned service increases are postponed until then, except the revised New York-Florida service (including new *Silver Palm*) will start as planned; the *Broadway Limited* route will get a train with no sleeping cars (due to station problems, no stops at Youngstown, Akron, Fostoria, or Garrett at first); the *Sunset Limited* will run as planned Los Angeles-Sanford, not Los Angeles-Miami.

Van Nuys, CA will become a stop for the *Coast Starlight*. [The Glendale building closes December 2 for six months for major remodeling, but trains will continue to stop.]...The second Washington-Newport News round trip (trains 75 and 96) will end on Fridays, but remain on Sundays.

Recent Changes: Since September 3, most New York-Albany Amtrak travel has been unreserved, except on the *Lake Shore Limited*, *Adirondack*, and the express turboliner. Custom Class seats, and all seats west of Albany, still are reserved...Since September 9, the 2:35 pm train from San Diego runs daily (there had been a 2:50 weekend departure).

Vermont: The State and Amtrak are cooperating to extend an Empire Corridor train to Rutland in early December, to be called the *Ethan Allen*.

Thruways: Amtrak's Meridian-Jackson, MS bus connection with the *Crescent* ended September 6.

A new Thruway bus connecting to/from the *Silver Star* at Fort Lauderdale, FL began September 4, serving Miami International Airport, Key Largo, Islamorada, Marathon, and Key West. After November 10, the bus connects only from the southbound *Silver Star*, and to the northbound *Silver Palm*.

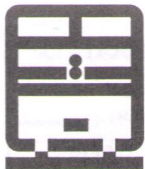
Intermodal: Capitol Trailways moved its Lancaster, PA bus operations to the Amtrak station, October 1.

John R. Martin, President; Eugene K. Skoropowski, Vice President; Robert W. Glover, Secretary; Joseph F. Horning, Jr., Treasurer; Ross B. Capon, Executive Director; Scott Leonard, Assistant Director; Jane L. Colgrove, Membership Director.

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